

Caldera and Bandelier National Monument.

Under our proposed legislation, management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve will be transferred to the National Park Service to be administered as a unit of the National Park System. The bill directs the Park Service to manage the Preserve to protect and preserve its natural and cultural resources, including its nationally significant geologic resources. Hunting and fishing would continue to be allowed, and grazing would also continue to be permitted. The National Park Service would also be directed to establish a science and education program utilizing the best practices created by the trust, as I discussed earlier.

The legislation would maintain the existing character of the preserve while strengthening protections for tribal, cultural, and religious sites and providing access by pueblos to the preserve. In addition, in consultation with the surrounding pueblos, restrictions will be put in place on the development and motorized vehicle use on the sacred volcanic domes within the preserve, similar to the current restrictions on Redondo Peak, the highest peak within the preserve.

I would like to emphasize that in no way is this legislation a criticism of the good work and valuable accomplishments made by the Board Members of the Valles Caldera Trust and the preserve staff. However, I believe having the preserve managed by the National Park Service—an agency with a mission protecting natural, historic, and cultural resources while also providing for public enjoyment of those resources—is more appropriate for the long-term future of the Valles Caldera. In my view, the desire for increased public access, balanced with the need to protect and interpret the Preserve's unique cultural and natural resources, would be best served by National Park Service management of the preserve.

It is my strong belief that transferring management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve to the National Park Service will be the best way to ensure the protection and enjoyment of the preserve over the long term. I urge my colleagues to support the bill as it is considered in the Senate.

The Los Alamos County Council and Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce have submitted resolutions in support of National Park Service management of the preserve. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that these resolutions be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

INCORPORATED COUNTY OF LOS ALAMOS
RESOLUTION No. 10-05

A resolution supporting congressional actions to facilitate the transfer of management of the Valles Caldera National Preserve from the Valles Caldera Trust to the National Park Service under the U.S. Department of the Interior to be managed as a preserve, per the findings of the December 2009 updated report on the NPS 1979 new area,

study that confirmed the Valles Caldera National Preserve's ability to meet the feasibility requirements of the National Park System.

Whereas, the enabling legislation PL106-248 created the Valles Caldera National Preserve (VCNP) from a unique parcel of land in north-central New Mexico, and by creating the Valles Calderas Trust as a wholly-owned government corporation to manage the preserve, the Valles Caldera Preservation Act of 2000 established a 20-year public-private experiment to operate the preserve without continued federal funding; and

Whereas, the Trust is charged with protecting and preserving the scientific, scenic, geologic, watershed, fish, wildlife, historic, cultural, and recreational values of the Preserve and achieving financial self-sufficiency by 2015, while operating the Preserve as a "working ranch;" and

Whereas, the GAO analyzed documents and financial records, and interviewed staff and stakeholders to determine the Trust's progress since 2000, the extent to which the Trust has fulfilled its obligations as a government corporation, and the challenges the Trust faces to achieve the Preservation Act goals, the results of which are published in an October 2009 Report to Congressional Committees, concluding that "The Trust Has Made Progress but Faces Significant Challenges to Achieve Goals of the Preservation Act;" and

Whereas, the national significance of the geological resources of the Valles Caldera was formally recognized in 1975 when the area was designated a National Natural Landmark; and

Whereas, the National Park Service (NPS) has existed since 1916 and has a proven record for successfully managing 89 million acres of sensitive and historically important public lands in America; and

Whereas, Senator Jeff Bingaman and Senator Tom Udall, on June 24, 2009 requested that the NPS undertake a reconnaissance study of the Valles Caldera National Preserve to assess its potential for inclusion in the NPS as a National Preserve; and

Whereas, the NPS completed "An Updated Report on the NPS 1979 New Area Study" published on December 15, 2009 which includes the following conclusion based on the findings: "... the feasibility of the Valles Caldera for inclusion in the national park system has been enhanced since 1979. The national significance and suitability of the site for inclusion in the system is confirmed;" and

Whereas, the report concludes that "current uses within the VCNP are generally compatible with those in other preserves or parks in the national park system, and there is untapped potential for enhancing public enjoyment;" and

Whereas, the report further concludes that "a single management entity for Valles Caldera and Bandelier would enhance communication, and integration of management programs that require a regional approach, such as fire management, law enforcement, and emergency response would facilitate comprehensive management of resource issues that affect both the Preserve and Bandelier National Monument;" and

Whereas, the report states that "the national information system and audience for sites within the National Park System would [result in] increases in regional and national public use of the area . . . [and] result in increased retail sales for recreation and convenience goods locally, as well as increased volume of recreational, tourist, and other services; and

Whereas, the VCNP adjoins Los Alamos County lands and is treasured by residents and visitors as a valuable natural, historical, recreational and educational resource; and

Whereas, Los Alamos County is recognized and marketed as the primary gateway to the VCNP, providing support services such as lodging, restaurants, shopping and additional cultural and recreational experiences to tourists from around the world who seek out this unique, north-central New Mexico attraction; and

Whereas, management of this resource directly affects Los Alamos County's economic development initiatives, particularly in the area of tourism marketing; and

Whereas, the majority of the members of public who submitted comment via meeting and e-mail expressed their desire for the National Park Service to assume land management and operations for the Valles Caldera National Preserve; and

Whereas, the National Park Service policies require a general management plan process that engages the public in a collaborative effort to identify preferred uses, restrictions and management practices, while allowing temporary public access to the Valles Caldera National Preserve; and

Whereas, the County respectfully requests that the enabling legislation include language to expedite the management plan process, where possible, in order to move from planning and temporary access to implementation. Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, by the Council of the Incorporated County of Los Alamos, That the County of Los Alamos supports the transfer of the Valles Caldera National Preserve to the U.S. Department of the Interior's National Park Service to be managed as a preserve. Los Alamos County requests to be notified and involved in the process at every opportunity; be it further

Resolved, That if legislation to transfer the Preserve is not enacted in 2010 Congress consider action to modify the year 2000 enabling legislation to remove obstacles restricting the Valles Caldera Trust's ability to effectively manage the Preserve to meet the public's access priorities

LOS ALAMOS COMMERCE &
DEVELOPMENT CORP.,

Los Alamos, NM, April 27, 2010.

Subject: Comment Concerning Future Management of Valles Caldera.

Senator JEFF BINGAMAN,
Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR BINGAMAN: Please accept our organization's comment on the question of the future management of the Valles Caldera property. Our organization operates several programs having strong interest in this matter. The Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce is an association of about 300 businesses, organizations, and individuals interested in positive community and economic development and our Los Alamos Meeting and Visitor Bureau program operates visitor centers in Los Alamos and White Rock and is an important resource for understanding visitation and tourism in our area.

We believe that the most desirable management option coinciding with the interests of the Los Alamos community is for the Valles Caldera to become a National Park managed by the National Park Service. This option presents several advantages:

The National Park Service option is by far the best from the standpoint of promoting visitation and tourism to the area. The NPS "arrowhead" is a powerful brand that far exceeds those of forest service and the Valles Caldera Trust in terms of attracting interest and visitation.

The NPS mission of "safeguarding America's special places" stands in contrast with the role of the Forest Service in consumptive use of resources. In contrast with the VCNP Trust, the NPS works with small businesses